Master's Degree

Purpose
A Master's Degree qualifies individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research, a pathway for further learning, professional practice and/or scholarship.

Master's Degrees usually build on a Bachelor's Degree, Graduate Diploma, Bachelor Honours Degree or a Postgraduate Diploma. They may also build on extensive professional experience of an appropriate kind. Their outcomes are demonstrably in advance of undergraduate study, and require individuals to engage in research and/or advanced scholarship.

Master's Degrees are constituted in one discipline or coherent programme of study. They may be undertaken by taught courses or research, or by a combination of both.

Credit requirements
The Master's Degree is at least 240 credits except where:

- it builds on a Bachelor's Degree with Honours or an equivalent qualification, or significant relevant professional experience, in which cases it can be fewer than 240 but no fewer than 120 credits
- it builds on a three-year Bachelor's Degree or an equivalent qualification, in which cases it can be fewer than 240 but no fewer than 180 credits.

The Master's Degree must comprise a minimum of 40 credits at level 9 with the remainder at level 8.

Entry
Providers of programmes leading to Master's qualifications are responsible for establishing entry requirements. The minimum entry qualification for a Master's Degree is a Bachelor's Degree or equivalent (to a Bachelor's Degree listed at level 7 on the NZQF).

A programme of study leading to the Master's Degree is open to those who have met the entrance requirements, including specified levels of attainment, in the programme admission regulations.

The minimum entry qualification for a Master's Degree of fewer than 240 credits but no fewer than 120 credits is either a Bachelor Honours Degree or a Postgraduate Diploma or an undergraduate degree followed by relevant professional experience.

Admission as an individual to a Master's Degree is based on the evaluation of documentary evidence (including the academic record) of the individual applicant’s ability to undertake postgraduate study in a specialist field of enquiry or professional practice.

Structure
Master's Degrees are structured in three principal ways:
By thesis or primarily by thesis
Entry to a Master’s Degree by thesis is normally based on a Bachelor Honours Degree or a Postgraduate Diploma in the same field of study. The degree includes 120 credits, of which at least 90 credits (at level 9) consist of a research project presented in the form of a thesis, dissertation, substantial research paper or scholarly creative work.

By coursework and thesis
Entry to a Master’s Degree by coursework and thesis is normally based on an undergraduate degree in the same field of study. The degree includes 240 credits, of which at least 90 credits at level 9 are in the form of a thesis, dissertation, substantial research paper or scholarly creative work, and of which up to 150 credits are from coursework.

By coursework
Entry to a Master’s Degree by coursework is normally based on an undergraduate degree achieved at a specified level of attainment. The degree is at least 120 to 240 credits and is achieved through coursework consisting of courses, project work and research in varying combinations.

It may build on undergraduate study in the same academic field, or it may build on the more generic graduate attributes of an undergraduate degree in other fields, or in some cases on relevant professional experience. Master’s Degrees that build on generic attributes and/or experience (often called ‘conversion Master’s’) are usually in professional fields and are recognised as appropriate professional preparation by the profession or industry concerned.

Outcomes
A graduate of a Master’s Degree is able to:

• show evidence of advanced knowledge about a specialist field of enquiry or professional practice
• demonstrate mastery of sophisticated theoretical subject matter
• evaluate critically the findings and discussions in the literature
• research, analyse and argue from evidence
• work independently and apply knowledge to new situations
• engage in rigorous intellectual analysis, criticism and problem-solving.

If a Master’s Degree includes a component of supervised research of not fewer than 90 credits at level 9, the graduate is also able to:

• demonstrate a high order of skill in the planning, execution and completion of a piece of original research or creative scholarly work
• apply such skills learned during the study programme to new situations.

The research should be completed to internationally recognised standards and demonstrate that the graduate has a capacity for independent thinking.

Relationship with other qualifications
A person who holds a Master’s Degree achieved to an appropriate standard, that includes a research component, may be considered for admission to a programme of advanced study and/or original research leading to a Doctoral Degree.

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